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REPRESENTATION

OF THE

Impiety & Immorality

OF THE

English Stage,

WITH

Reasons for putting a Stop thereto :
and some Questions Address'd to
those who frequent the Play-
Houses.

The Third Edition.

L O N D O N,

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A
 REPRESENTATION
 OF THE
 Impiety & Immorality
 OF THE
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THE various Methods that have been used for Preventing the outrageous and insufferable Disorders of the STAGE, having been in a great measure defeated: It is thought proper, under our present Calamity, and before the approaching FAST, to collect some of the *Prophane and Immoral Expressions* out of several late PLAYS, and to put them together in a little Compass, that the Nation may thereby be more convinced of the *Impiety of the Stage*, the Guilt of such as frequent it, and the Necessity of putting a Stop thereto, either

by a total Suppression of the *Play-Houses*, as was done in the Reign of *Queen Elizabeth*, or by a Suspension for some considerable time, after the Example of other Nations; where, we are informed, the Stages were very chaste, in respect of ours of this Nation, who are of a Reformed Religion, and do with so much Reason glory in being of the best constituted Church in the World; nay, 'tis out of doubt but the *Theatres* even of *Greece* and *Rome* under *Heathenism*, were less obnoxious and offensive, which yet by the Primitive Fathers and General Councils stood condemned.

And is not the dangerous and expensive War we are engaged in, together with the present Posture of Affairs, a sufficient Reason for this, tho' the *Play-Houses* were less mischievous to the Nation than they are?

Are we not also loudly called upon to lay aside this prophane Diversion, by the late dreadful Storm, terrible beyond that which we are told was felt in the Year 1636? which, as a Right Reverend Prelate has observ'd, some good Men then thought presag'd further Calamity to this Nation, and was accordingly followed by the Com-
motions

motions in *Scotland* the very next Year, and not long after by the Civil War in *England*.

And if we go on to countenance such open and flagrant Defiances of Almighty God, have we not great Reason to fear his heavy Judgments will consume us?

But further, Her Majesty having now, upon Occasion of the late great Calamity, appointed a Day of Solemn Fasting and Humiliation throughout the Kingdom, for the deprecating of God's Wrath, surely the Players have little Reason to expect that they shall still go on in their abominable Outrages; who, 'tis to be observed with Indignation, did, as we are assured, within a few Days after we felt the late dreadful Storm, entertain their Audience with the ridiculous Representation of what had fill'd us with so great Horror in their Plays call'd *Mackbeth* and the *Tempest*, as if they design'd to Mock the Almighty Power of God, *who alone commands the Winds and the Seas, and they obey him*. No surely, it cannot but be hoped, that a Suspension at least of the Players acting for some considerable time will follow, when the *Prophaneness and Immorality of the Stage* comes to Her Majesty's Knowledge, who, 'tis to

be remembred, has never once given any Countenance to the Play-House by Her Royal Presence, since Her happy Accession to the Throne.

The abominable obscene Expressions which so frequently occur in our Plays, as if the principal Design of them was to gratifie the lewd and vicious part of the Audience, and to corrupt the virtuously dispos'd, are in this black Collection wholly omitted; lest thereby fresh Poison should be administred instead of an Antidote.

After the Endeavours used by Sir Richard Blackmore, Mr. Collier, and others, to Correct and Reform the Scandalous Disorders and Abuses of the Stage were found too unsuccessful; in the Year 1699. several of the Players were prosecuted in the Court of Common-Pleas, upon the Statute of 3 Jac. 1. for prophaneely using the Name of G O D upon the Stage, and Verdicts were obtained against them.

And

And in Easter-Term, 1701, the Players of one House were Indicted at the King's - Bench - Bar, before the Right Honourable the Lord Chief Justice Holt, for using these following Expressions, and were thereof Convicted.

In the Play call'd, The Provok'd Wife.

' But more than all that, you must know
' I was afraid of being damn'd in those
' Days; for I kept sneaking, cowardly
' Company, Fellows that went to Church,
' and said Grace to their Meat, and had
' not the least Tincture of Quality about
' em.

' Damn 'em both, with all my Heart, and
' every thing else that daggles a Petticoat;
' except four generous Whores, with *Betty*
' *Sands* at the Head of 'em, who were
' drunk with my Lord *Rake* and I, ten
' times in a Fortnight.

' Sure, if Woman had been ready crea-
' ted, the Devil, instead of being kick'd
' down into Hell, had been married.

' Pox of my Family.

' Pox of her Virtue.

' He has married me, and be damn'd to
' him.

' Pox of the Parson.

' Damn Morality, and damn the Watch.

' *Let me speak and be damn'd.

' And you and your Wife may be damn'd.

' Stand off and be damn'd.

' Damn me, if you han't.

' Lord! What Notions have we silly
' Women from these old Philosophers of
' Virtue, for Virtue is this, and Virtue is
' that, and Virtue has its own Reward;
' Virtue, Virtue is an Ass, and a Gallant is
' worth forty on't.

' If I should play the Wife and Cuckold
' him.

' 'That would be playing the down-right
' Wife indeed.

' I know according to the strict Statute
' Law of Religion, I shou'd do wrong; but
' if there were a Court of *Chancery* in Hea-
' ven, I'm sure I shou'd cast him.

' If there were a House of Lords you
' might.

' If you should see your Mistress at a
' Coronation, dragging her Peacocks

** This is spoken by one in a Minister's Habit.*

' Train,

‘ Train, with all her State and Insolence
 ‘ about her, it would strike you with all
 ‘ the awful Thoughts that Heaven it self
 ‘ could pretend to, from you.

‘ Madam, to oblige your Ladyship, he
 ‘ shall speak Blasphemy.

‘ In hopes thou’lt give me up thy Body,
 ‘ I resign thee up my Soul.

‘ A Villain, but a repenting Villain ;
 ‘ Stuff which Saints in all Ages have been
 ‘ made of.

‘ Satan and his Equipage ; Woman
 ‘ tempted me, Lust weaken’d me, and so
 ‘ the Devil overcame me ; as fell *Adam*,
 ‘ so fell I.

*A Bill was likewise found against the
 Players of the other House, in the
 Term abovementioned, for the fol-
 lowing Expressions ; but the Indict-
 ment being wrong laid, they were
 acquitted : but they were Indicted
 the Term following for the same,
 which Indictment is not yet tried.*

In the Humour of the Age.

‘ Marriage, that was only contriv’d for
 ‘ the

‘ the meaner Rank ; tell me of Marriage,
 ‘ commend me to a Whore.

‘ Every ferious Thought, was fo much
 ‘ Time loft.

‘ We address you with the fame awful
 ‘ Reverence we petition Heaven.

In Sir Courtly Nice.

‘ Nay, his Salvation is a Looking-Glass,
 ‘ for there he finds his eternal Happinefs,
 ‘ Surly’s Heaven, at leaft his Priest is his
 ‘ Claret-Glass, for to that he confefles all
 ‘ his Sins, and from it receives Abfolution
 ‘ and Comfort. But his Damnation is a
 ‘ Looking-Glass, for there he finds an e-
 ‘ ternal Fire in his Nofe.

‘ That fame thing, the Word *Love*, is a
 ‘ Fig-Leaf to cover the naked Senfe, a
 ‘ Fashion brought up by *Eve*, the Mother
 ‘ of Jilts, ſhe Cuckold her Hufhand with
 ‘ the Serpent, then pretended to Modesty,
 ‘ and fell a making of Plackets.

‘ Let him be in Mifery and be damn’d.

‘ And a Pox on thee for’t.

‘ Prithee Dréfs and be damn’d.

‘ Pox on ’em : Pox on you all Whores.

‘ Pox take him.

‘ Rot me.

‘ Let him Plague you, Pox you, and
 ‘ damn you ; I don’t care and be damn’d.

The

The following Expressions are transcribed out of the Plays that have been Acted and Printed since they were Indicted for the horrid Passages above-recited.

*In the Comedy call'd,
The False Friend. 1702.*

Pag. 7. 'Pox take ye. Pag. 12 'The Devil fetch me, &c.

Pag. 22. 'Heaven's Blessing must needs fall upon so dutiful a Son; but I don't know how its Judgments may deal with so indifferent a Lover.

Pag. 28. 'Say that 'tis true, you are married to another, and that a----- 'Twou'd be a Sin to think of any Body but your Husband, and that ---- You are of a timorous Nature, and afraid of being damn'd.

'How have I lov'd, to Heaven I appeal; but Heaven does now permit that Love no more.

'Why does it then permit us Life and Thought? Are we deceiv'd in its Omnipotence? Is it reduc'd to find its Pleasure in its Creature's Pain?

Pag. 33.

Pag. 33. *Leonora's* Charms turn Vice
'to Virtue, Treason into Truth; Nature,
'who has made her the Supream Object
'of our Desires must needs have design'd
'her the Regulator of our Morals.

'There he goes I'faith; he seem'd as if
'he had a Qualm just now; but he never
'goes without a Dram of Conscience-water
'about him to set Matters right again.

Pag. 43. 'Speak, or by all the Flame
'and Fire of Hell eternal; speak, or thou
'art dead.

In the Inconstant, or the Way to
Win him. 1702.

Pag. 10. 'My Blessing! Damn ye, you
'young Rogue.

Pag. 20. What do you pray for? Why,
'for a Husband; that is, you implore Pro-
'vidence to assist you in the just and pious
'Design of making the wisest of his Crea-
'tures a Fool, and the Head of the Crea-
'tion a Slave.

Pag. 43. 'But don't you think there is
'a great deal of Merit in dedicating a beauti-
'ful Face to the Service of Religion?

'Not half so much as devoting them
'to a pretty Fellow. If our Femality had
'no

‘no Business in this World, why was it sent
‘hither? Let’s dedicate our beautiful Minds
‘to the Service of Heaven: And for our
‘handsom Persons, they become a Box at
‘the Play, as well as a Pew in the Church.

In the Modish Husband.

Pag. 12. ‘She’s mad with the Whimsies
‘of Virtue and the Devil.

Pag. 28. ‘I think Wit the most imper-
‘tinent thing that belongs to a Woman,
‘except Virtue.

Pag. 47. ‘The Devil fetch him.

Pag. 50. ‘I’m going towards Heaven,
‘Sirrah; it must be the Way to my Mi-
‘stress.

In the Play call’d, Vice Reclaim’d, &c.

Pag. 15. ‘Now the Devil take that
‘dear false agreeable; what shall I call him,
‘*Wilding*. But I’ll go home and pray
‘heartily we may meet again to morrow.

‘By Heaven, &c.

Pag. 24. ‘By Heaven it becomes you.

Pag. 27. ‘The Devil take me.

Pag. 31. ‘Lightning blast him! Thun-
‘der rivet him to the Earth! That Vulture,
‘Conscience, prey upon His Heart, and
‘rack him to Despair!

Pag. 32.

Pag. 32. Grant me, ye Powers, 'one
' lucky Hint for Mischief.

Pag. 43. 'Then damn me, if I don't, &c.

Pag. 47. 'Rot me and be damn'd.

Pag. 52. 'By Heaven, &c.

Pag. 60. 'Well, the Devil take me.

In the Different Widows.

Pag. 1. 'Damn'd Lies, by *Jupiter* and
' *Juno*, and the rest of the Heathen Gods
' and Goddesses; for I remember I paid
' two Guinea's for swearing Christian
' Oaths last Night.

Pag. 2. Pox take him. *Pag. 24.* Ye im-
' mortal Gods, who the Devil am I?

Pag. 61. 'May the Devil, Curses,
' Plagues and Disappointments light upon
' you.

In the Fickle Shepherdess.

Pag. 17. Bid *Charon* instantly prepare
' his Boat, I'd row to Hell.

Ibid. O *Ceres*, can thy all-seeing
' Eye behold this Object, and yet restrain
' thy Pity?

Pag. 32.

Pag. 32. ' Fly hence to Hell; there hide
' thy Head lower than Darknefs. Wou'd
' thou hadst been acting Incest, Murder,
' Witchcraft, when thou cam'st to pray :
' Thou hadst in any thing sinn'd less than
' in this Devotion.

Pag. 36. ' Where Love's blind, God
' sends forth continual Arrows.

Pag. 42. ' *Ceres*, to whom we all things
' owe.

Pag. 46. ' Almighty *Ceres*.

In the Play called,

Marry or do Worfe, 1704.

Pag. 4. ' Pox on me. Rot the World.

Pag. 6. Pox on him.

Pag. 8. ' A Plague on her.

' The Devil take you for a Witch.

' The Devil take you for a Fool.

Pag. 12. ' No Matrimony; the Devil
' danced at the first Wedding there was,
' and Cuckoldom has been in Fashion ever
' since.

' The Devil take you for me.

Pag. 12, & 13. ' The Devil's in't if he
' been't fit for Heaven, when my Master
' has writ Cuckoldom there.

The

The Devil take me, &c.

Pag. 18. A Plague choak you.

Pag. 21. A smart Jade by Heaven.

Pag. 33. Now the Devil take him, &c.

Pag. 37. ' A Plague on my Master.

Pag. 44. The Devil take me, &c.

Pag. 47. ' I pity him, and yet a Pox
' on him too.

Pag. 51. ' That dear damn'd Virtue of
' hers tempts me strangely.

Pag. 54. ' The Devil take me, &c.

Pag. 64. ' By Heaven.

It must be again remembred, that the detestable lewd Expressions contained in the abovementioned Plays, which seem to be the most pernicious part of our Comedies, are not here recited, least they should debauch the Minds and corrupt the Manners of the Reader, and do the same Mischief, in some degree, as they do in the greatest when used upon the Stage, tho' mentioned with never so great Indignation. And it must be likewise taken notice of, that these Instances of the prophane Language of Plays, which the good Christian will read with Horror, would not have been put together, and laid before the World, had not the Incorrigibleness of the Players made it necessary for the Ends above-mentioned.

And

And now may not these plain Questions be proposed, without Offence, to the Persons who frequent our Play-Houses; and especially to such of them as appear at any times in our Churches, and at the Holy Sacrament, and be submitted to the Judgment of all Mankind.

I. Can Persons who frequent the *Play-Houses*, and are not displeased to hear Almighty God blasphemed, his Providence questioned and denied, his Name prophaned, his Attributes ascribed to sinful Creatures, and even to Heathen Gods, his Holy Word burlesqued, and treated as a Fable, his Grace made a Jest of, his Ministers despised, Conscience laughed at, and Religion ridiculed; in short, the Christian Faith and Doctrine exposed, and the sincere Practice of Religion represented as the Effect of Vapours and Melancholy, Virtue discountenanced, and Vice encouraged, Evil treated as Good, and Good as Evil, and all this highly aggravated by being done in cool Blood, upon Choice and Deliberation? Can those, I say, that

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frequent

frequent the *Play-Houses*, and are not displeased with any of these things, be thought to have any due Sense of Religion?

II. Can Persons who often spend their Time and Money to see Plays, be suppos'd to be displeas'd with, and to have a due Indignation at, the Hearing the Outrages beforementioned, which so often occur in them, and of which there is a dismal Specimen laid before the World in this Paper?

III. Can sincere Christians encourage and assist, by their Presence and Purse, Men in committing such Practices, and in their living by a Profession, which, as it is managed, is so inconsistent with Christianity?

IV. Can any who have a true Concern for the Honour of Almighty God, give Countenance and Support to such Entertainments whereby he is so dishonour'd and affronted, though they could suppose themselves above the Danger of being the worse for them, which they can never be?

V. Can Persons who know 'tis generally allowed, that the Infidelity and
Loose-

Looseness of the Age is very much owing to the Play-Houses; who have observed, that the Zeal of particular Persons have decreased, and their Strictness of Life abated, by their going to Plays; and do think that the Gospel obliges them to discourage, by their Reproof and Example, Sin in their Neighbours, to endeavour, according to their Advantages and Opportunities, to further their spiritual Welfare, and to be *Lights* to lead others in their Duty and Way to Heaven? Can such, tho' they could think themselves wholly secure from taking Infection in going to the Play-House, encourage others, even weak and feeble Christians, by their Example, to run to the same dangerous Place likewise? Can this be thought an Expression of their Charity to their Neighbour, or to be acceptable to Almighty God? or rather, Should not Compassion to the Souls of their Neighbours keep such as have a due Concern for them from going to such Places?

VI. Can it be denied, but that the going of a few sober Persons, tho' but once a Year, to see a Play, that they think less offensive and dangerous, does encourage many others to go frequently to Plays, and to those that are more abo-

minably loose and prophane; who might never go at all to them, if none frequented them but such as were entirely abandoned to Shame as well as Vice?

VII. Can Persons who have good Dispositions to Religion, who go but once or twice in a Year to the *Play-House*, say, upon their Experience, that they think the seeing of Plays is proper to encrease the Love of God in Men, to fit them for holy Exercises, and to promote their spiritual Welfare? or rather, Must they not own, that by the seeing of Plays they are more indisposed for Religious Performances; that the Awe and Reverence which they had for God and Religion, and the Horrour which they had at the Sins which they there see Men divert themselves with, and make a Jest of, does thereby wear off; that their sensual Desires are more heightened and enflamed; that they are more alienated from God, and more enamoured with the World?

VIII. Can Persons who are sensible of, and do heartily lament their want of the Love and Fear of God, their too great a Love of the World, the frequent Distractions of their Mind in Prayer, and the Unruliness of their Lusts and Passions, delight to frequent
a Place

a Place where they are surrounded with Temptations to the Love of the World; where what can excite to unlawful Desires and Actions is promoted; and the Arts of an easie Defilement are studied? Can they think this consistent with the Rules of keeping from all Appearance of Evil, of avoiding the Occasions and Temptations to Sin, and that Watchfulness over their Thoughts, and that Diligence in making their Calling and Election sure, as the Gospel requires? Do they in any wise herein adorn their Profession, resemble the Christians who lived in the first Ages of Christianity; or those who in any Age since have been celebrated for their Virtue?

IX. Can Persons in good earnest pray, as they are directed in the Lord's-Prayer, *Not to be led into Temptation*, and yet frequent the Play-House, where they are assaulted with more and greater Temptations than incounter them perhaps in any other Place?

X. Can such Persons as go to the *Play-Houses* on Week-days, and appear in our *Churches* on the Lord's-day, and even at the Holy Sacrament, where they declare, that they *present themselves, their Souls and Bodies,*

Bodies, as a reasonable, holy and lively Sacrifice to God, be suppos'd to attend upon these Holy Ordinances with a suitable Frame of Mind; since the Language and Design of Sermons, and of our Liturgy, and of Plays, are so different and even directly contrary to each other?

XI. Can Ladies really dislike Lewd Discourse in Conversation, and yet like to see Lewdness represented in all the Dresses that can vitiate the Imagination, and fasten upon the Memory?

XII. Can Parents, or any other Persons who have the Conduct of Youth, and have any serious Concern for the Souls of their Children, or of those that are committed to their Care, satisfy their Consciences, without Restraining them from going to a place of such Impiety and Infection; where they would be in the way to unlearn the best Instructions of their Parents and Governours; where Pride and Falshood, Malice and Revenge, Injustice and Immodesty, Contempt of Marriage, and false Notions of Honour, are recommended; where Men are taught to call in question the first Principles of their Religion, and are led to a contempt of Sacred things?

XIII.

XIII. Can sincere and judicious Christians think that the Players exposing (as they pretend to do) Formality, Humour, and Pedantry, is an Equivalent for their insulting sacred things, and their promoting to so high a degree the Prophaneness and Debauchery of the Nation?

XIV. Can modest and prudent Christians think, that the Opinion of the General Councils, Primitive Fathers, and so many wise and good Men in the several Ages of the Church, who have condemned the going to Plays as unlawful, and as a renouncing the Baptismal Engagements, doth not deserve great regard?

XV. Can sincerely religious Persons hear of the most horrid, licentious Treatment of sacred things as is in our Plays, and this not among *Mahometans* and *Infidels*, not at *Rome* and *Venice*, but in a Protestant Countrey, without a Fear that the Judgments of God will fall upon us?

XVI. Can less be expected from good Christians, who are sensible of the intolerable Disorders of the Play-Houses, and the Mischiefs that are brought upon Mankind

kind by them, than that they would use all proper Methods for the Discouraging and Restraining their Relations and Friends from going to them, as they have any Concern for the Honour of God, the Good of Mankind, and the Welfare of their own Immortal Souls; that so by Persons, who have any virtuous Principles, keeping from a Place which they will never be able to frequent with Safety to themselves, under any partial Regulation; the *Players*, the unhappy, the miserable *Players*, may be necessitated to quit their Profession, and take upon them some honest and useful Employment (wherein good Men ought to encourage and assist them) and thereby the execrable Impieties of the *Play-Houses*, and the ruinous consequences of them, be prevented ?

XVII. Lastly, Can Persons frequent the *Play-Houses*, after the outrageous Impieties of them, and the fatal Effects of their going to them, are in so full and advantageous a manner laid open to the World, without a greater Aggravation of their Guilt ?



F I N I S.

